

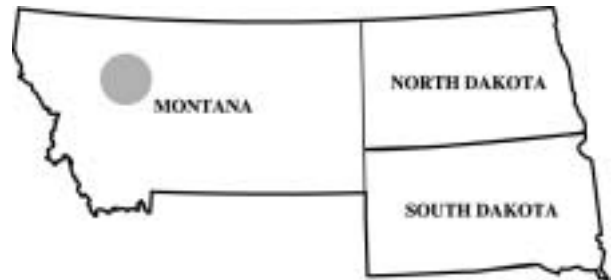


October 2001

Blackleaf Gas Field

WHERE ARE WE NOW?

- In 1992, BLM prepared a final environmental impact statement (FEIS) for development of the Blackleaf Gas Field but decided not to issue a record of decision until we received a drilling application.
- BLM received several notices of staking and drilling applications following completion of the FEIS, but did not complete a record of decision due to changes in lease ownership, changes in the unit operator, incomplete drilling applications, withdrawal of some staking notices, and fluctuating natural gas prices.
- Encouraged by the recent rise in natural gas prices, three companies recently staked a total of three wells.
- The proposed Startech Well is in the Blindhorse Outstanding Natural Area (ONA) about three miles from three shut-in gas wells. The Startech lease predates the ONA designation.
- The proposed Dorothy Tripp Rutter Estate well is located on federal minerals/private surface owned by the Boone and Crockett Club. The proposed well is about four miles from the shut-in wells.
- The proposed Resource Management Associates, LLC well is located in the Lewis and Clark National Forest. It is about 2.5 miles from the shut-in wells.



HOW DID WE GET HERE?

- The Blackleaf Study Area is located along the Rocky Mountain Front 75 miles northwest of Great Falls.
- It contains about 40,327 federal and 18,176 state and private mineral acres.
- The Blackleaf area provides habitat for a variety of wildlife, including several threatened and endangered species; contains outstanding scenic qualities; provides a variety of recreational opportunities; is important to the tourist industry; is near the Bob Marshall Wilderness; contains an ONA; includes part of the Teton Roadless Area on the Lewis and Clark National Forest; and contains a significant amount of natural gas reserves.
- The area has shut-in gas wells, but analysis indicates that substantial reserves remain and there is a high potential for more gas discoveries and production.
- From 1982 through 1991, total production from four wells in the Blackleaf area was 7 billion cubic feet of natural gas and 33,400 barrels of oil.



WHAT NEEDS TO BE DONE?

- A new EIS is needed to update the cumulative impacts assessed in the 1992 EIS, evaluate the current drilling proposals, and consider new information on cultural resources and sensitive/threatened and endangered species.
- This will require coordination with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Forest Service and the Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks.
- BLM will prepare a project plan for the new EIS to outline projected costs and timelines.

WHO ELSE IS CONCERNED?

- National and local environmental groups (i.e., Montana Wilderness Association) are strongly opposed to any development on the Rocky Mountain Front.
- The Blackfeet and Salish-Kootenai tribes have asked to be notified of any developments in the area.
- Senator Baucus introduced a bill in 1998 to authorize the exchange of existing federal oil and gas leases on Forest Service lands within the Blackleaf EIS study area for federal oil and gas lease sale bidding credits or payments due on existing leases. The 105th Congress did not deliberate the bill.
- The Lewis and Clark National Forest issued a decision August 28, 1997, not to allow any future oil and gas leasing on the Rocky Mountain Front.

FOR MORE INFORMATION:

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